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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

FARM POPULATION

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ESTIMATES OF THE FARM POPULATION OF THE UNITED STATES APRIL 1950 TO APRIL 1954

(Figures for 1951 and 1952 in this report supersede those for these years in Series Census-BAE, No. 18. Comparable figures for 1910 to 1950 appear in Series Census-BAE, No. 16. Figures are rounded to the nearest thousand without being adjusted to group totals, which are independently rounded)

The population living on farms in the United States numbered about 21,890,000 in April 1954, according to an estimate prepared cooperatively by the Bureau of the Census and the Agricultural Marketing Service. The estimates for April 1951 and April 1952 have been revised, and an estimate for 1953 has been prepared. The estimates for the three years 1951-1953, as shown in table 1, are 24,160,000, 24,283,000, and 22,679,000, respectively.

The drop in farm population between 1950 and 1954 represents a continuation of the long-time downward trend, which has reduced the number of farm residents to 13.5 percent of the total population by 1954. Changes have been particularly marked since the beginning of World War II. Between 1940 and 1945, the number of persons living on farms fell by over five million. Some return to farms occurred following the end of the war. After 1948, the downward trend was resumed; and, since 1950, farm population has decreased on the average about three-quarters of a million persons per year.

Table 1.--TOTAL POPULATION OF THE UNITED STATES, INCLUDING ARMED FORCES OVERSEAS, AND FARM POPULATION: 1950 TO 1954

Year (April)	Total population, including Armed Forces overseas	Farm population	
		Number of persons	Percent of total population
1954.....	161,763,000	21,890,000	13.5
1953.....	159,017,000	22,679,000	14.3
1952.....	156,420,000	24,283,000	15.5
1951.....	153,691,000	24,160,000	15.7
1950.....	151,132,000	25,058,000	16.6

Estimates of the farm population by age and sex are presented in table 2. In the last four years, substantial changes have occurred among all age groups of both sexes. The most striking changes have occurred among those groups in which large migrations from the farm population are usual when opportunities are available in the nonfarm economy. Men of working age and young women left farms between 1950 and 1954 at high rates.

Table 2.--ESTIMATED CIVILIAN POPULATION LIVING ON FARMS, BY AGE AND SEX: 1954 AND 1950

Age	1954 (April)			1950 (April)		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
All ages.....	21,890,000	11,276,000	10,614,000	25,058,000	13,039,000	12,019,000
Under 14 years.....	6,914,000	3,588,000	3,326,000	7,597,000	3,969,000	3,628,000
14 years and over.....	14,976,000	7,688,000	7,288,000	17,461,000	9,070,000	8,391,000
14 to 17 years.....	1,743,000	903,000	840,000	1,994,000	1,064,000	930,000
18 and 19 years.....	639,000	330,000	309,000	820,000	436,000	384,000
20 to 24 years.....	1,154,000	538,000	616,000	1,596,000	819,000	777,000
25 to 44 years.....	5,079,000	2,570,000	2,509,000	6,042,000	2,976,000	3,066,000
45 to 64 years.....	4,467,000	2,301,000	2,166,000	4,927,000	2,626,000	2,301,000
65 years and over.....	1,895,000	1,046,000	848,000	2,082,000	1,149,000	933,000

Data on the employment status of the farm population of working age, those 14 years old and over, are shown in table 3. Although the over-all extent of labor force participation remained about the same between 1950 and 1954, males and females had somewhat different experiences between the two dates. Labor force participation declined slightly among men and may have increased slightly among women. Also some changes have been observed among farm residents in the type of activity engaged in between 1950 and 1954. The decline in farm population has been accompanied by a decline among the employed in the percentage engaged in agriculture from 69 to 62 percent and an increase from 31 to 38 percent in the percentage employed in nonagricultural industries. In absolute terms this shift has meant a decline of nearly a million and a half in the number employed in agriculture and only a minor change in the number of farm residents employed in nonagricultural industries.

Table 3.--EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF THE CIVILIAN POPULATION 14 YEARS OLD AND OVER LIVING ON FARMS: 1954 AND 1950

Employment status, industry, and sex	1954 (April)	1950 (April)	Percent	
			1954	1950
Total.....	14,976,000	17,461,000	100.0	100.0
Labor force.....	8,188,000	9,711,000	54.7	55.6
Employed.....	7,940,000	9,479,000	53.0	54.3
Agriculture.....	4,951,000	6,628,000	33.1	38.0
Nonagricultural industries.....	2,989,000	2,851,000	20.0	16.3
Unemployed.....	248,000	232,000	1.7	1.3
Not in labor force..	6,788,000	7,750,000	45.3	44.4
Male.....	7,688,000	9,070,000	100.0	100.0
Labor force.....	6,430,000	7,787,000	83.6	85.9
Employed.....	6,266,000	7,628,000	81.5	84.1
Agriculture.....	4,317,000	5,732,000	56.2	63.2
Nonagricultural industries.....	1,949,000	1,896,000	25.4	20.9
Unemployed.....	164,000	159,000	2.1	1.8
Not in labor force..	1,258,000	1,283,000	16.4	14.1
Female.....	7,288,000	8,391,000	100.0	100.0
Labor force.....	1,758,000	1,924,000	24.1	22.9
Employed.....	1,674,000	1,851,000	23.0	22.1
Agriculture.....	634,000	896,000	8.7	10.7
Nonagricultural industries.....	1,040,000	955,000	14.3	11.4
Unemployed.....	84,000	73,000	1.2	0.9
Not in labor force..	5,530,000	6,467,000	75.9	77.1

The chart which appears on page 4 shows the estimated farm population as of April for each year in the period 1910 to 1954. It is based on the data presented in this report and in No. 16 of this series entitled "Revised Estimates of the Farm Population of the United States: 1910 to 1950."

DEFINITIONS AND EXPLANATIONS

Farm population.--The data presented in this report relate to the civilian population living on farms, both urban and rural, regardless of occupation. The farm population is defined according to the new definition adopted for the 1950 Census of Population. According to this definition, the farm population includes all persons living on farms, as determined by the question, "Is this house on a farm (or ranch)?" The enumerators are instructed to classify persons living on what might be considered farm land as nonfarm if they pay cash rent for their homes and yards only. Persons in institutions, summer camps, "motels," and tourist camps are classified as nonfarm residents.

Age.--The age classification is based on the age of the person at his last birthday.

Employment status.--In the classification by employment status, persons are classified into two major groups: The labor force and not in the labor force. The labor force comprises the total of all civilians 14 years of age and over classified as employed or unemployed in accordance with the following criteria. Employed persons comprise those who, during the survey week, were either (a) "at work"--those who did any work for pay or profit or worked without pay for 15 hours or more on a family farm or business; or (b) "with a job but not at work"--those who did not work and were not looking for work but had a job or business from which they were temporarily absent because of vacation, illness, industrial dispute, bad weather, and various other reasons. Unemployed persons include those who did not work at all during the survey week and who were looking for work or would have been looking for work except for (a) temporary illness, (b) indefinite layoff, or (c) belief no work was available. All civilian persons 14 years of age and over who are not classified as employed or unemployed are defined as "not in the labor force." This group includes those in school, persons engaged in own home housework, retired persons, those permanently unable or too old to work, etc. Persons doing only incidental unpaid family work (less than 15 hours) are also classified as not in the labor force.

A person with two or more jobs during the survey week was classified as employed in the industry in which he worked the greatest number of hours during the week. Consequently, some of the persons shown in this report as engaged in nonagricultural activities also may have been employed in agriculture, and vice versa.

Revision of estimates for 1951 and 1952 and estimate for 1953.--A re-examination of previously

published farm population figures for April 1951 and 1952 (Census-BAE No. 18) was made after the CPS estimates for April 1953 and subsequent quarters became available. The April figures from the 68-area sample showed irregular fluctuations, which were presumably due mainly to sampling error. Revised estimates for April 1951 and 1952 and the estimate for April 1953 were computed by using data for the five quarters centered on the April date for which the estimate was being prepared. For example, for the April 1951 estimate, quarterly estimates available from the Current Population Survey for the months of October 1950, January, April, July, and October 1951 were weighted, giving a weight of one-eighth to the two October estimates and a weight of one-fourth to each of the estimates for the other three months. The original CPS estimates and the revised estimates for 1951-1953 are shown in table 4.

Table 4.--FARM POPULATION, ORIGINAL CPS ESTIMATES AND APRIL-CENTERED ANNUAL AVERAGES: 1951 TO 1953

Year (April)	Original CPS estimate	April-centered annual average ¹
1953.....	22,529,000	22,679,000
1952.....	24,819,000	24,283,000
1951.....	24,037,000	24,160,000

¹ Unpublished farm population estimates for quarterly dates, used in computing the April-centered annual averages, can be made available upon request for limited use.

Comparability with 1950 Census data.--The estimates in this release are comparable with the revised Census-BAE estimate for April 1950. The revised Census-BAE estimate for April 1950, derived from the Current Population Survey, is roughly 1.7 million above that obtained from the 1950 Census of Population (23,331,738), although the same definition was specified for both enumerations. Examination of the returns for identical households in the two enumerations revealed that the largest part of the discrepancy (approximately 1½ million) was due to differences in classification.¹ Although there is no conclusive evidence on the relative validity of the

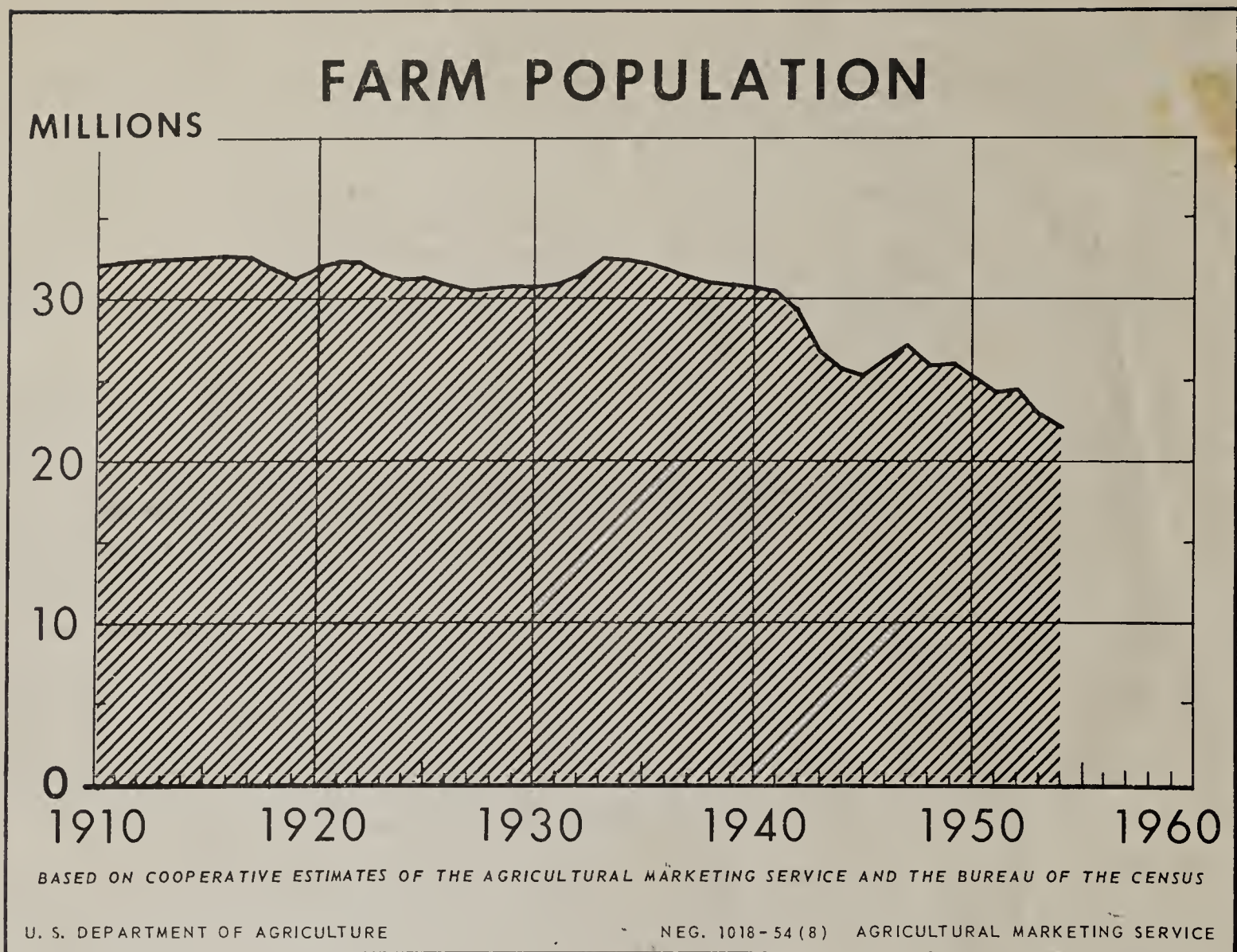
CPS as compared with the census classification of particular households as farm or nonfarm, investigations in other subject-matter fields have demonstrated that the more experienced and better-trained CPS enumerators generally treated marginal cases in a more correct fashion. Partly for this reason, it was decided to use the CPS rather than the census level to represent 1950 in the revised Census-BAE series. This decision preserves continuity in the series since the annual postcensal estimates for the present decade are derived from the Current Population Survey.

Source and reliability of the estimates.--

The estimates presented in this report are based on data obtained in connection with the monthly population sample survey of the Bureau of the Census. The statistics for April 1954 are based on a new sample design instituted in January 1954. This sample is spread over 230 sample areas comprising 453 counties and independent cities. A total of 24,000 to 26,000 dwelling units and other living quarters are designated for the sample at any time, and completed interviews are obtained each month from about 20,000 to 22,000 households. Of the remainder, about 500 to 1,000 are households for which information should be obtained but is not, and the rest are vacant households or those otherwise not to be enumerated for the survey. The data for previous years were based on a different sample, which consisted of about the same number of units but which covered only 68 sample areas in 42 States and the District of Columbia. Since the estimates are based on sample data they are subject to sampling variability. As in any survey work, the results are also subject to errors of response and nonreporting.

An estimate of the sampling variability of the total farm population is being prepared and will be furnished upon request when available.

¹ This study involved matching April 1950 CPS schedules and 1950 Population Census schedules for identical households and comparing the returns in these two independent enumerations. For a fuller discussion of the Census-CPS match, see report No. 16 of this series.



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